

H.R. 3537 Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act of 2019

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Background: The Boots to Business program is a two day, in person entrepreneurship program offered by the Small Business Administration (SBA) as part of the Department of Defense's Transition Assistance Program (TAP). Initially launched in 2012, the Boots to Business program offers transitioning service members and military spouses information about self-employment and business ownership. The Veterans Business Outreach Centers deliver these services to over 180 military installation nationwide.

The Boots to Business curriculum focuses on the key steps for evaluating business concepts and developing business plans. In addition, participants are connected with SBA resources, including access to capital, counseling and training, and contracting opportunities. In FY 2018, nearly 17,200 veterans, service-members, and military spouses stationed at military installations nationwide participated in the two-day course.

The Boots to Business program is specifically designed to instill the knowledge necessary to take a business from concept to execution and facilitate the road to entrepreneurship for our nation's veterans. Research has shown that servicemembers are especially qualified to start and run their own businesses. While serving in the military, they learn how to make good decisions in chaotic environments and are natural leaders, confident, and driven.

Every year, more than 200,000 servicemembers make the transition from military to civilian life. Transition assistance is critical to ensure that those who serve in the military have opportunities for meaningful employment. The National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2019 requires servicemembers participating in TAP to enroll in one of three capstone classes, which include: Accessing Higher Education, Career and Technical Training, and Entrepreneurship (Boots to Business). It is expected that this new requirement will significantly increase the number of servicemembers who participate in the Boots to Business program.

Legislation: Specifically, this bill amends the Small Business Act to codify for five years the Boots to Business program, which helps transitioning servicemembers launch and grow small businesses.

Section-by-Section Analysis

Section 1 – Short Title: The “Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act of 2019”.

Section 2 – Boots to Business Program: This section amends the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C.)

1. This subsection updates the definition of Members of the Armed Forces, including National Guard and Reserves; individuals participating in the Transition Assistance Program; individuals discharged or released from service under non-dishonorable conditions; spouse or dependent of any of the above.
2. This subsection authorizes the Boots to Business program for five years.
3. This subsection sets the goals of the program, which include in-depth training for servicemembers interested in owning a business; and development of tools to identify opportunities, draft business plans, identify sources of capital, connect with local resources for small business, and launch a small business.
4. This subsection delineates the program components, which include a two-day, in-person entrepreneurship program. It also gives SBA the authority to collaborate with public and private entities to develop the curricula; and it ensures Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs) regularly participate in the program, and to the reasonable maximum extent, allows the participation of other resource partners as well. The subsection also facilitates the sharing of course and outreach materials with the Secretary of Defense for inclusion in DOD websites, manuals, and other materials related to the Transition Assistance Program and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for distribution and display at local VA facilities.
5. This subsection requires a report to be submitted to the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate and the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives within 180 days after enactment of the legislation and annually thereafter. The report will evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the Boots to Business program.